

VZCZCXRO3651
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0980/01 1151016
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 251016Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2467
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000980

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: Southern Sudan: Panyagor Struggles for Recovery

¶1. Summary: Of all the places visited by CG Juba officials during a recent PRM monitoring and evaluation trip (septel), Panyagor is by far the least developed. Also known as Mabior, the town is located north of Bor in what is now Twic East County (Note: Many Southern towns changed their name during the war once its town name appeared on the Operation Lifeline Sudan no-go list so that aid deliveries could continue. End note.) Residents of Panyagor face extreme environmental conditions, with an annual cycle of drought and floods. Security also remains difficult; local residents complained of cattle raids, gender-based violence, hyena attacks, and threats from the Nuer to the North. End Summary.

Climate: No Goldilocksian Compromise

¶2. During the 5-month dry season, Panyagor suffers from chronic drought with often distant bore holes serving as the only source of water. In the rainy season, the region turns quickly from desert to swamp, and the residents face pervasive flooding, a proliferation of insects, and the spread of disease.

¶3. While the dirt roads in Panyagor were currently being used as a conduit for both commercial goods and humanitarian supplies from Kenya, all ground transportation is expected to cease within the next month once the rains begin. The only airstrip will also become unusable and the region will be largely cut off from humanitarian aid and any medical care -- the town only has a small dispensary and one regional doctor who travels over a wide range. Aid organizations are currently working to preposition all the supplies needed before the rains start.

¶4. Dykes have been built to contain the Nile, which annually rises and engulfs the town. However, it is unclear if the dykes will hold, and even if they do it will not control the flooding from the heavy rains, which do not drain on the level plain.

¶5. Locals also report that agriculture is impossible because there is always either too much or too little water for farming. (Comment: Other Southern Sudanese with similar climatic conditions do farm. End comment.) The area is currently being fed almost entirely by the World Food Program, which has been targeting the most vulnerable in the population. According to the local Sudan Relief and Recovery Commission (SRRC) director, the WFP distributes rations for about 10,000, which is then shared among the population of nearly 100,000.

Insecurity from All Sides

¶6. Insecurity also plagues the local residents, whose Dinka population say they live in constant fear of their Nuer neighbors to the north. Sitting in the path of the 1992 Nuer march to Bor, now known as the Bor massacre, Panyagor has a high percentage of displaced population. Residents complained that they are afraid the Nuer to the North will return. This fear is compounded by the fact that the commander of these Nuer troops, Riek Machar, is now Vice President of Southern Sudan.

¶7. During the dry season, the men must range their cattle great distances to find water, and they become vulnerable to cattle raids from Murle militia to the south and east. Deng Tiop, Executive Director of Twic East County, who represented the County Commissioner at meetings with the Acting Consul General, said that these cattle raids, while serious, were just a part of life and there was no way to prevent it. The Dinka cattle herders are typically well armed and have been known to attack non-Dinka cattlemen who come into their territory seeking water.

¶8. More vulnerable are the women of Twic East, who often must walk 30 minutes or more to get water in the dry season, and often must range further to collect firewood. These women said that these errands are dangerous because of threats from bandits who may kidnap or rape them, and because of the possibility of hyena attack. They say it is more dangerous to walk to the bore hole at night, but they often brave the risks to avoid the extremely long daytime waits at the pump.

¶9. While the women did not complain of other forms of gender-based violence, the SRRC director told CG Juba

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officials that he believes it is pervasive, although there is no effort to prevent it or even talk about it.

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